

NRA Heralds New Voluntary Public Access Initiative

Thanks Roberts and Moran for Making it Possible

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The National Rifle Association (NRA) recently reported that the federal Open Fields Initiative is now in effect through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for state governments interested in enrolling in the program or expanding their existing Open Fields program. In making the announcement, the NRA publicly thanked Senator Pat Roberts (R-KS) and Congressman Jerry Moran (R-KS) for their instrumental support to include the NRA-backed Open Fields Initiative language into the House and Senate passed 2008 Farm Bill.

“On behalf of our more than four million NRA members, I’d like to thank the members of Congress who made the nationwide expansion of Open Fields possible,” said Chris W. Cox, NRA’s chief lobbyist. “Thanks to them, we hope that Open Fields will be the pathway to more hunters and more hunting opportunities and will safeguard our treasured hunting heritage for future generations.”

“Those who enjoy outdoor recreation spend their dollars in rural communities, improving local

economies, while gaining access to additional lands for hiking, fishing and hunting,” Roberts said. “By allowing this access, farmers and ranchers can take advantage of the beneficial incentive programs. I am pleased we were able to allow more states to participate in the program.”

“It is good news that USDA finally issued the long-awaited rules to implement the Open Fields legislation passed over two years ago,” Moran said. “This initiative will help both young and old who live in urban areas and may not otherwise have access to outdoor activities like hunting and fishing, while at the same time helping landowners to improve wildlife conservation.”

Regulations to implement the Open Fields Initiative were published by the USDA on July 8, 2010. The new, federal initiative will support state efforts to develop voluntary, incentive-based programs that expand public access to private lands for hunting, fishing and other recreational purposes. The initiative encourages owners and operators of privately-held farm, ranch, and forest lands to voluntarily make their lands accessible to the public, and is expected to open up more than 10 million new acres of private land to the public each year. Landowners are compensated through rental payments and other types of incentives such as technical and conservation services.

“This has been a long time coming,” concluded Cox. “Our efforts will finally pay off for the millions of hunters and sportsmen across America looking for places to hunt and for new ways to experience our country’s rich hunting and wildlife heritage.”

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